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Center for Small Towns Delivers on U of M's Public Promise

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Center for Small Towns Delivers on U of M's Public Promise

- *Each year CST works with 50+ communities to find local solutions to local challenges like affordable housing, water quality, food security, and economic strength.*
- *Students do much of the hands-on work, growing into the role of community leader along the way.*
- *CST leverages support from outside organizations to make the most of its resources and have the greatest impact for Minnesotans.*

In its 20-plus years, the [Center for Small Towns](#) (CST) has earned the nickname "Land Grant 101." Each year this outreach unit serves more than 50 of Minnesota's small towns, schools, and nonprofits—from the west central region to the Iron Range to the Mississippi Valley.

"We're one of the most visible aspects of the (Morris campus's) land-grant mission," says Roger Rose, associate professor and CST director. "We have the specific role of doing regionally focused outreach with communities that have the most resource constraints."

For Minnesotans

Serving Minnesota communities of 5,000 or fewer, CST works with communities to find local solutions to local challenges like affordable housing, water quality, food security, and economic strength. University faculty, staff, and students work on projects that range from survey work and research support to marketing plans and more.

"We're helping communities figure out how to solve housing issues, how to make sure kids are properly cared for, and those things come back as a benefit to the state," says Amy Mondloch, community program administrator.

Future Leaders

Students do much of the hands-on work, growing into the role of community leader along the way. They share lessons learned with their classmates and, later, the places they call home.

"Students are able to engage in real-world community projects and are shown they can handle difficulties, communicate, and troubleshoot in a variety of situations," says Margaret Doom '18, Wagner, South Dakota.

Doom does marketing work for the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission in Appleton. "[CST] believe[s] in the goals of their community partners and in students' ability to contribute real value to these projects," she says.

Fiscal Responsibility

CST leverages support from organizations like the Otto Bremer Trust and West Central Initiative to make the most of its resources and have the greatest impact for Minnesotans. According to Rose, it's one of the most effective (and responsible) ways in which the University "helps rural."

"CST is very important to how the U is seen externally, in terms of contributing to the region," he says.
"We are a key part of the outreach side, and in our budget-constrained environment that's more important than ever."

To learn more about CST, visit www4.morris.umn.edu/center-small-towns.

Pictured: CST staff and partners discuss "Diversity in the Post-Agricultural Rural Economy"